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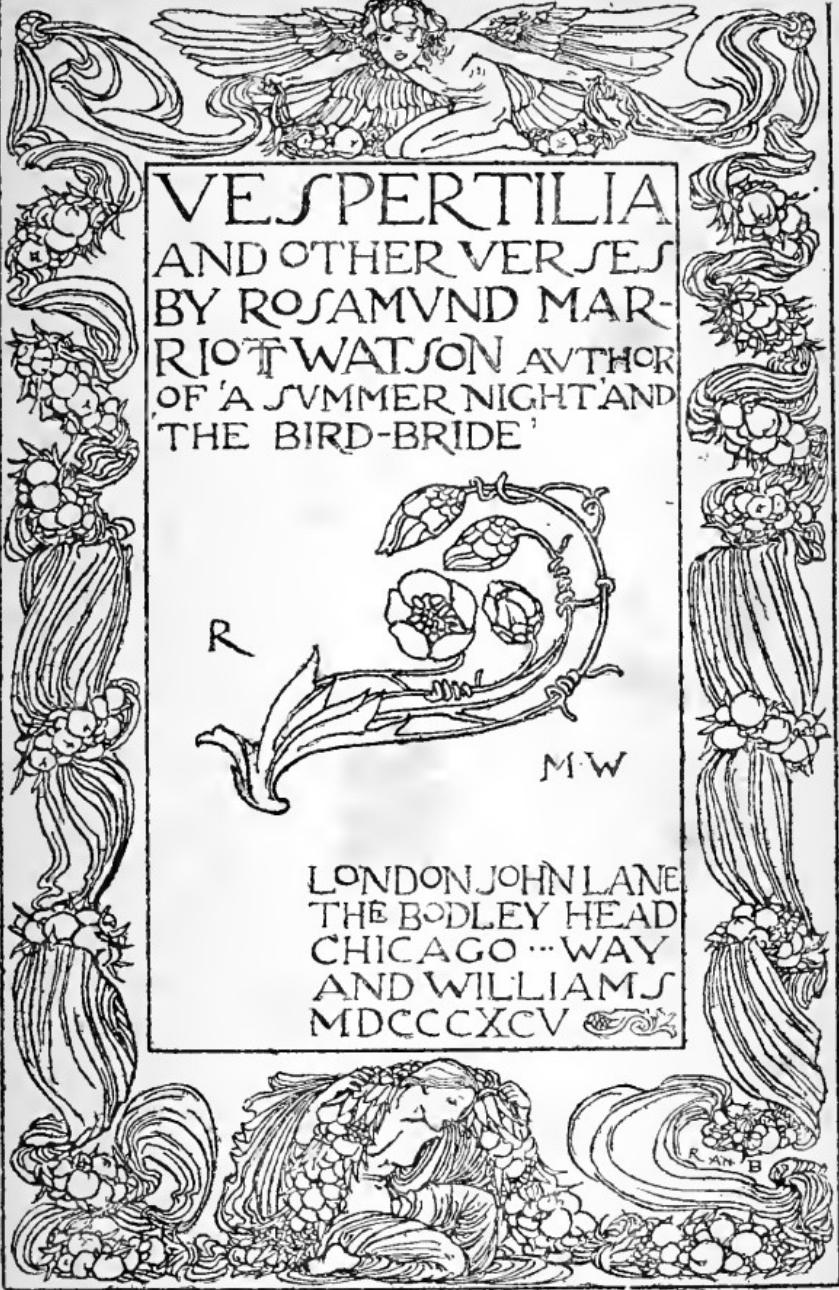


V E S P E R T I L I A

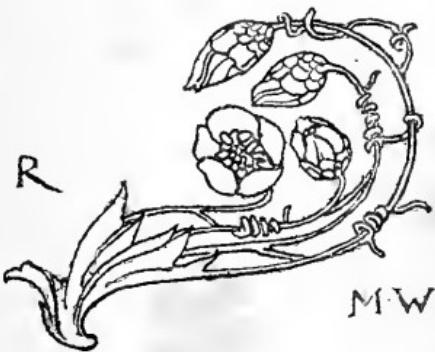
AND OTHER VERSES

UNIFORM WITH THIS.

A SUMMER NIGHT AND OTHER
POEMS. By ROSAMUND MARRIOTT
WATSON. New Edition. With decorative Title-page. Fcap. 8vo. 3s. net.



VESPERTILIA
AND OTHER VERSES
BY ROSAMUND MAR-
RIOT WATSON AUTHOR
OF 'A SUMMER NIGHT' AND
THE BIRD-BRIDE'



LONDON JOHN LANE
THE BODLEY HEAD
CHICAGO WAY
AND WILLIAMS
MDCCCXCV

*Of this Edition, 650 copies have been printed for
England and America*

Edinburgh : T. and A. CONSTABLE, Printers to Her Majesty

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ALICE MEYNELL

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V E S P E R T I L I A
AND OTHER VERSES

VESPERTILIA

IN the late autumn's dusky-golden prime,
When sickles gleam and rusts the idle plough,
The time of apples dropping from the bough,
And yellow leaves on sycamore and lime ;
O'er grassy uplands far above the sea
Often at twilight would my footsteps fare,
And oft I met a stranger-woman there

Who stayed and spake with me :
Hard by the ancient barrow smooth and green,
Whose rounded burg swells dark upon the sky
Lording it high o'er dusky dell and dene,

We wandered—she and I.

Ay, many a time as came the evening hour
And the red moon rose up behind the sheaves,
I found her straying by that barren bower,
Her fair face glimmering like a white wood-flower
That gleams through withered leaves,
Her mouth was redder than the pimpernel,
Her eyes seemed darker than the purple air
'Neath brows half hidden—I remember well—
'Mid mists of cloudy hair.

And all about her breast, around her head,
Was wound a wide veil shadowing cheek and chin,
Woven like the ancient grave-gear of the dead :
 A twisted clasp and pin
Confined her long blue mantle's heavy fold
Of splendid tissue dropping to decay,
 Faded like some rich raiment worn of old,
With rents and tatters gaping to the day.
Her sandals wrought about with threads of gold,

Scarce held together still, so worn were they,
Yet sewn with winking gems of green and blue,
And pale as pearls her naked feet shone through.

And all her talk was of some outland rare,
Where myrtles blossom by the blue sea's rim,
And life is ever good and sunny and fair;
'Long since,' she sighed, 'I sought this island grey—
Here, where the winds moan and the sun is dim,
When his beaked galleys cleft the ocean spray,
For love I followed him.'

Once, as we stood, we heard the nightingale
Pipe from a thicket on the sheer hillside,
Breathless she hearkened, still and marble-pale,
Then turned to me with strange eyes open wide—
'Now I remember! . . . Now I know!' said she,
'Love will be life . . . ah, Love *is* Life!' she cried,
'And thou—thou lovest me?'

I took her chill hands gently in mine own,
' Dear, but no love is mine to give,' I said,
' My heart is colder than the granite stone
That guards my true-love in her grassy bed ;
My faith and troth are hers, and hers alone,
Are hers . . . and she is dead.'

Weeping, she drew her veil about her face,
And faint her accents were and dull with pain ;
' Poor Vespertilia ! gone her days of grace,
Now doth she plead for love—and plead in vain :
None praise her beauty now, or woo her smile !

.
Ah, hadst thou loved me but a little while,
I might have lived again.'

Then slowly as a wave along the shore
She glided from me to yon sullen mound ;
My frozen heart, relenting, smote me sore—

Too late—I searched the hollow slopes around,
Swiftly I followed her, but nothing found,
Nor saw nor heard her more.

And now, alas, my true-love's memory
Even as a dream of night-time half-forgot,
Fades faint and far from me,
And all my thoughts are of the stranger still,
Yea, though I loved her not :
I loved her not—and yet—I fain would see,
Upon the wind-swept hill,
Her dark veil fluttering in the autumn breeze ;
Fain would I hear her changeful voice awhile,
Soft as the wind of spring-tide in the trees,
And watch her slow, sweet smile.

Ever the thought of her abides with me
Unceasing as the murmur of the sea ;

When the round moon is low and night-birds flit,
When sink the stubble-fires with smouldering flame,
Over and o'er the sea-wind sighs her name,
And the leaves whisper it.

‘*Poor Vespertilia*,’ sing the grasses sere,
‘*Poor Vespertilia*,’ moans the surf-beat shore;
Almost I feel her very presence near—
Yet she comes nevermore.

THE CITY OF DREAM

WHEN Spring was mine and all the ways were green,
And all the valleys veiled in golden mist,
And all the shadows pearl and amethyst,
Through the dim maze of morrows unforeseen
Fair and far-glimmering as the dusky fire
That lights a pine-wood when the sunset dies—
Faint as the cuckoo calling as it flies—
Sweet as the Spring's own secret-smitten lyre—
Now shining clear with sun-washed roof and spire,
Now, wrapped and compassed round with mysteries—
A haunted palace bowered in ancient trees—
I knew the City of my Heart's Desire.

Even as a late-remembered tryst, it drew
My wandering feet forever to the quest:
Dreaming, I saw it through the grey dawn dew,
Waking, I dreamed for aye to find the clue,
Past this tree-shadowed slope—that blue hill's
crest—
Eager I sought my paradise anew
With every sun that fared from east to west.

The autumn evening closes, mild and grey,
Lit by a fading sunset's narrow gleam,
And still to-morrow-wards I turn and say
—‘There, peradventure, I shall find the way’—
And still a strange voice calls by wood and stream,
And still the vision glimmers strangely bright—
The wide world o'er I wander, wander, yet,
And still to-morrow-wards my face is set
To seek the city of my heart's delight.

By pastoral plains with purple rivers twined,
By gardens red with amaranth and rose,
Where crumbling towns lie steeped in rich repose,
The grey towers sleeping in the sun and wind,
By gabled street and grassy orchard-close,
I go—and all as painted shadows seem—
Nor moved to linger, nor to look behind
I pass, and many a happy pleasaunce find,
But never the town, the country, of my dream.

HIC JACET

AND is it possible?—and must it be—
At last, indifference 'twixt you and me?
We who have loved so well,
Must we indeed fall under that strange spell,
The tyranny of the grave?

In sullen severance patient and resigned,
By each of each forgotten out of mind—
Dear, is there none to save?
Must you whose heart makes answer to mine own,
Whose voice compels me with its every tone,
Must you forget my fealty to claim,
And I—to turn and tremble at your name,
Sunk in dull slumber neath a lichenèd stone?

Shall not my pulses leap if you be near?
Shall these endure, the sun, the wind, the rain,
And naught of all our tenderness remain,
Our joy—our hope—our fear? . . .

Sweet, 'tis the one thing certain—rail or weep,
Plead or defy, take counsel as we may,
It shall not profit us: this, only, pray
Of the blind powers that keep
The harvest of the years we sow and reap,
That naught shall sever nor estrange us—Nay,
Let us live out our great love's little day
Fair and undimmed, before we fall on sleep.

AFTER SUNSET

THE black downs tower to westward
 A tomb for the buried sun,
The flats of the water meadows
 Are fading from green to dun.

Dark spreads the vast arena,
 Swart on the yellow light,
And out of the gloom and the silence
 A strange voice cries to the night.

Cries—and a strange voice answers,
 Sudden, and hoarse, and slow,
Heavy with pain past telling,
 The weight of a monstrous woe.

Still, as I wait and hearken,
I know not which they may be ;
Voices of down and marshland,
Or the voice of my heart in me.

But I know that the cry they echo
Was old when the world was young,
The plaint of a nameless sorrow
Whose speech is an unknown tongue.

A SONG OF SHIPWRECK

THE gull may fly by the cliff-top high,
The hovering hawk may soar ;
But the carrion crow she bides below,
While the drowned folk swim ashore.

The drowned souls sail on the autumn gale
Between the shore and sea,
And there's never a one beneath the sun
Will bear them company.

O nowhere bound are the souls of the drowned,
Nor seaward nor for shore ;
The sun goes west and the grey gulls rest,
But the dead rest nevermore.

THE LAMP IN THE POOL

FAR down in the deep, black water
A golden lanthorn swings,
Whose lustre widens and trembles
As tremble the water rings.

Above, on the purple twilight
The moon in her glory shows,
But still with a mellower splendour
The lamp in the water glows.

Like a love-lamp set in a window
On a starless summer night,
Steadfast it gleams and beckons,
A jewel of amber light.

Steadfast it points and beckons,
And ever the self-same way,
For it hangs at the gate of a palace
That knows not the light of day.

The great elms' leafy branches
Lean over the water's brink,
Where deep in their sheltering hollows
The shadows in shadows sink.

But the gold lamp in the water
It glimmers and beckons bright,
Like a love-lamp set in a window
On a murky summer night.

For him who would rise and follow
Full smooth is the path, and straight,
The way through the glistening water
That leads to the palace gate.

And he who shall cross the threshold
No more shall he strive nor weep,
Being come to the Tower of Silence,
In the Valley of Endless Sleep.

MÄRCHEN

THE old house by the waterside,
With leaded casements blear and grey,
Looks down upon the sluggish tide,
The long canal whose currents glide
Serene and slow from day to day.

And I, beneath the linden shade,
Still watch the front of carven wood—
That frowning front so strangely made,
With scroll and arch and balustrade,
And signs that none hath understood.

And none, they say, doth dwell therein—
Yet, sometimes, when the sun goes down,
Through those dim panes I seem to win

The tinkle of a mandolin,
The glamour of a golden gown.

'Tis she, I know, abideth there,
The Lady of the Locks of Gold,
Than sun and moon and stars more fair
My heart's ordained—my soul's despair—
For she is young, and I am old.

Yet some blue-glimmering night in May,
When all the lindens are in flower,
Then eld and grief shall pass away,
The vain desire, the long delay,
Ah ! then shall strike my magic hour.

For She shall fling the casement wide,
Shall lean and beckon to me there,
Shall call me, softly, to her side—
So deeply loved, so long denied—
The Princess with the Golden Hair.

WALPURGIS

ALONG the valley to the sea
The steel-grey river glimmers wan.
Oh, what shall this night bring to be ?
And what may come when light be gone ?

Across the dark Downs, face to face,
Two sullen fires flame east and west—
The blood-red sunset's lurid space,
The blood-red moon's uprearing crest.

A weary Mænad, flushed with wine,
Between the dull dun drift she peers,
Heavy with lewd old rites malign,
Lusting for human blood and tears.

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The sea-wind holds its breath for fear,
The black trees cringe upon the height ;
Still, with her wicked, wanton leer,
The red moon menaces the night.

FANTASY

GOLD roses, climbing, clasp a casement round,
Down on the grey stone sill their sweet heads laying,
Below there stands a pale nymph ivy-crowned,
A strange air playing.

Her frail form trembles with the viol's strain,
Her shoulder leans against a fluted column,
Her eyes now shine, now plead, and now again
Watch, soft and solemn.

The fallen petals lie about her feet,
Their loose curled gold the marble terrace flecking,
Sunset and moonrise round about her meet,
Her bright hair decking.

And one within looks upward from his scroll,
Doubtful, reluctantly his clear eyes lifting,
Wherein there leaps a sudden, eager soul,
Their cold veil shifting.

‘Ah, listen,’ thus the quivering viol pleads,
‘Still are the olive-slopes where grey moths hover ;
The ripples murmur to the misty reeds ;
Maid meeteth lover.

‘Yon river wandering goes to seek the sea,
Warm with the memory of day’s red glory ;
Come forth and hear in magic groves with me
My wondrous story.’

Smiling he stands, young laurels on his hair,
Dim dreams of joys foregone his pale brow flushing ;
Half-tearful smiles, with pitying lips one fair
Dead rose-bud brushing.

Sighing he stoops and leans upon the sill :

‘ Sweet, but a little while this low light lingers,
Thou canst not hinder night nor day-dawn chill
With those lithe fingers.

‘ Fain would I wander in the sun-stained gloom
With thee, might this charmed hour forsake us never,
Might but my steps retraced this quiet room
Re-enter ever ! ’

Still sob the viol-strings their slow refrain,
Her eyes, uplifted, through a tear-film glisten—
‘ In years far hence I ’ll come to thee again,
And thou wilt listen.

‘ Ah, then my spells shall compass thee around,
With wild airs whispering and fair lost faces ;
And thou shalt hearken for my viol’s sound
In shady places.’

BLACKBIRD'S SONG

SWEETHEART, I ne'er may know,
 Never may see ;
White is the blossom snow,
 Green is the lea :
Still the stream sings of you,
All the wood rings of you—
Sweetheart, oh sweetheart mine,
 Where can you be ?

True-love I ne'er may meet
 All the world through,
Dim is the dawn, and sweet,

Deep is the dew.

Listen—oh lost and dear!

Come—for your love is here,

Here in the hazel-wood,

Waiting for you.

VALE

THE rock-doves grieve the golden noontide still—
Deep in the darkened grove, with querulous moan,
Ever they call me from this wooded hill
Where I sit all alone.

The autumn world seems sorrowful and strange,
Though hung with gold and steeped in mellow
light ;
Throughout there menaces a cloud of change,
An end of all delight.

No more the swallows wheel about the sky,
No more the blackbird whistles in the dew ;
Both rose and nightingale are gone—and I
Would follow summer too.

The ash-tree keys hang rusting on the boughs ;
 Sad and insistent as an ancient tune,
Over and o'er through summer's empty house
 Echoes the rock-doves' rune.

Fain would I follow, at their drowsy call,
 By shadowy glades and plaintive tinkling streams,
Where never wind doth sway the tree-tops tall,
 Nor earthly sun-ray gleams.

I would not watch another autumn fade,
 Vext with shrill winds and stung with vain regret ;
Be it mine to seek the inviolable shade,
 And—maybe—to forget.

Loosed from the narrow prison of days and nights,
 Set free from Reason's rigorous castle-keep—
Roaming by misty valleys and dim heights—
 The hollows and hills of sleep.

ARMISTICE

LAST night I grasped the bony hands of Death
Hard in mine own, the while, in desperate wise,
Straitly I gazed into his hollow eyes.
(We were alone beneath a linden-tree
Whose wet leaves trembled to the spring wind's
breath;
The bloom of Spring was on the purple skies.)
Heavy of heart I stood and gazed on him,
So fair the world was in that twilight dim,
So sweet its shadow-haunted mysteries.

‘Tell me,’ I cried, ‘for this I needs must know,
What have we done, O cruel Death, to thee,
That thou art still our one implacable foe,

Whom naught propitiates, naught may overthrow,
Whom none escapeth, howsoe'er he flee,
But, when thou beckonest, must arise and go ?'

Gently Death answered me, and musing said,
' Am I, in very truth, thine enemy ?
Nay, but thine angel, pitiful and mild ;
I am the parent ; thou, the wayward child,
Sprung from my loins, yet holding me in dread.

' Now, as in all time past, all time to be,
I welcome those the World and Time discard,
Whom Life hath banished, whom Eld hath maimed
and marred ;
None is too vile, too full of misery.
Ever and aye my portal stands unbarred.—
Hath not thine own voice called me over and o'er ?
Hounded by Care, beset and tortured sore,
Hath not thine own heart oftentimes turned to me ?

‘ Go, and forget me yet awhile again ;
But when thy deep desire of life shall wane,
When thou art weary of all things, worst and best,—
Weary of taking thought, of Joy and Pain,
Of thine own faults and failures weariest,—
Cry to me then,—thou shalt not ask in vain ;
Come unto me, and I will give thee rest.’

GLORIA MUNDI

GIVE us the earth's whole heart but once to know,
But once to pierce the secret of the Spring,—
Give us our fill,—so we at end may go
Into the starless night unmurmuring.

Gold lights that beckon down the dusky way,
Where loud wheels roll, impetuous, through the
night ;
The lamp-lit leaves ; the maddening airs of May ;
The heady wine of living, dark and bright.

Give us of these, and we are blest, in truth ;
The wandering foot, the keen, unflagging zest,
One with the glorious world's eternal youth,
Of all that is, and is not, first and best.

Ah, vain desire, our straitened years to mar !
Troubled we turn and listen, unreleased,
To music of a revel held afar,
Evasive echoes of a distant feast.

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THE PRODIGAL SON

YESTERDAY

I turned me homeward to the little hamlet,
The small grey village on the steep hill-side ;
I passed the red kine grazing on the uplands,
 The white sheep in the fields :
Green were the elms, and green the feathery ash-trees,
Sweet, sweet and loud the birds sang in the valley,
 Though it was autumn.

Beside the old well in the shadowed lane,
Where from high banks the tall trees lean together,
I stood to watch the water drip and glisten
 Upon the frail fern-garlands ;

And lo ! there came a woman with her pitcher.

Two little children clung about her apron ;

Around her head

She wore a linen kerchief, white as lilies,

And at her breast a knot of purple pansies

Thrust in her bodice.

Blithely she laughed—'twas she—my Heart's Belovéd !

Trembling, I named her name—I stretched my fingers,

Touching her arm—yet never made she answer,

Seeming as though she heeded not nor heard me,

Only she said, ' Make haste, make haste, my children,

The air strikes dank and chilly in the shadow ;

Come where the sun shines '—so they hastened from
me ;

Far down the lane I heard their shrill, sweet talk.

Heavy of heart I sought my father's cottage,

And there a strange lad leaned upon the gate,

A stranger-maiden plied my mother's loom ;
Yet I went in and passed athwart the chamber
To the square hearth-nook where my mother sat,
Propped in her high-winged chair.

Weeping, I bowed my head upon her knees :
' Forgive me, I have come at last,' I said ;
' I am come back, to leave you nevermore.'
Yet she replied not, only sighed and shifted
The seam she sewed on nearer to the light,
And then I saw it was a shroud she wrought.

I wandered all about the garden pathways,
And marked my moss-rose choked with clambering
bindweed ;
The diamond-shapen plot abloom with asters
Lilac and white,
And love-lies-bleeding with its amethyst trails :
The little wooden cote I made one winter,
To house my doves, was broken and decayed,

And, by the porch, my thrush's wicker cage
Hung on its nail with open-dangling door.
My old dog, drowsing in a pool of sun,
Awoke and stretched. I stroked his tawny head,
But he cowered back from me, and crouched in terror,
Whining and shivering, though I still caressed him,
Murmuring fond words, familiar, foolish phrases
He once would leap to hear—

Then suddenly—

I knew—ay, then I knew in very surety
That I was dead.

D'OUTREMER

A BLACK moor and a golden sky,
Darkness and dew ;
A whirr of westering wings on high—
And dreams of you,

O far upon some outland shore
Those wings may rest,
But my heart slumbers nevermore
That seeks your breast.

O far beyond the farthest hill
The sun has set.
My wandering thoughts that track you still
Fare farther yet.

ON LETHE WHARF

On Lethe Wharf the winds are still,
And motionless the clouds above
Yon sluggish river, dark and chill,
That healeth Hope, and Hate, and Love.

The low plain widens far away,
Beneath the mild and misty skies ;
Beyond, the land of night and day,
Our land of change and tumult, lies.

Here is no doubt—despair—surmise—
But Life and Thought with folded wings,
Watch the dull distance with dull eyes
In this grey home of hopeless things.

The cold, black water lapses by,
From bank to bank the ripples spread ;
But never bird or butterfly
Is mirrored in that tide of lead.

Only tall poppies, white and red,
Stand close together by the brink,
While on the glimmering current shed
Their fallen petals drift or sink.

And I will leave the world behind,
This springtide world of stir and fret,
To go where those dim waters wind
And never blooms the violet.

On Lethe Wharf shall be my lot,
Among the poppies, red and white,
Spring and my sorrow forsown—forgot—
With all the dreams of day and night.

A SONG OF LONDON

THE sun 's on the pavement,
The current comes and goes,
And the grey streets of London
They blossom like the rose.

Crowned with the spring sun,
Vistas fair and free ;
What joy that waits not ?
What that may not be ?

The blue-bells may beckon,
The cuckoo call—and yet—
The grey streets of London
I never may forget.

O fair shines the gold moon
On blossom-clustered eaves,
But bright blinks the gas-lamp
Between the linden-leaves.

And the green country meadows
Are fresh and fine to see,
But the grey streets of London
They 're all the world to me.

NOCTURN

O THE long, long street and the sweet
Sense of the night, of the Spring !
Lamps in a glittering string,
Pointing a path for our feet.

Pointing and beckoning—where ?
Far out of thought, out of view,
Deep through the dusk and the dew :
What but seems possible there ?

O the dark Spring night and the bright
Glint of the lamps in the street !
Strange is their summons, and sweet,
O my beloved, to-night !

LONDON IN OCTOBER

AUTUMN goes wandering—wandering on her way
Down the mild slope that shortens day by day
Under these quiet skies.

Here, as the green leaves fade, the gold leaves fall,
A still enchantment widens over all,
Painting the streets with vague autumnal dyes
Like ancient tapestries ;
Touching to fantasy unfelt before
The motley hoardings' many-coloured lore ;
With every floating leaf, each sound that sighs,
Seizing the sense with something subtler yet—
The deep exhilaration of regret
For this sweet hour that flies.

The long, barge-laden stream
Bears on the roseate haze, the golden gleam ;
The leaves go hurrying at the light wind's call
As to some festival.

While we, half sorrowful, half exultant, too,
Blown by the old year's breath to meet the new,
Stretch forth our hands to greet we know not what,
So fair forever is the unknown lot !

So strong the glamour of the London street,
With dim expectancies

Holding the heart in bondage stormy and sweet.
Here, though the dead leaves flit,
Doubt shall not hold dominion over it,
Nor age nor sorrow, but sensuous sheer delight
In the blue, lamp-hung night.

Thine are our hearts, beloved City of Mist
Wrapped in thy veils of opal and amethyst,

Set in thy shrine of lapis-lazuli,
Dowered with the very language of the sea,
Lit with a million gems of living fire—
London, the goal of many a soul's desire !
Goddess and sphinx, thou hold'st us safe in thrall
Here while the dead leaves fall.

RUS IN URBE

A LITTLE brown finch in the plane-tree swings,
And my heart, like a cage-bird, beats its wings,
Sick with desire for the woodland ways,
The hills where the red kine graze.

Dead leaves whirl in the dusty street,
But I know the wind from the sea blows sweet,
Through dark deep clefts of the valleys green,
Where the white gulls float between.

This colourless street is bleak and bare,
But robins sing in the orchards there ;
Apples are bright on the orchard bough,
And the elms gleam golden now.

.

The wind dies out with the fading sun,
The dance of the withered leaves is done ;
A strange spell holdeth the hard grey street,
And the murky air grows sweet.

I watch from my window, looking down,
The golden lights of the great grey town—
The blue, blue dusk and the amber glare
Of gas in the twilight air.

I hear no call from the wind-swept hill,
The voice of the breaking surf is still,
And which is dearer I know no more—
The street or the far sea-shore.

AT KENSAL GREEN CEMETERY

JANUARY 21ST, 1892

THE last notes of the requiem die away ;
Lone is that chamber now where lowly and great
Together knelt to sorrow and to pray ;
Where, crowned by Death, a princely prelate lay
In more than royal state.

With sullen stroke tolls out his funeral knell—
No more, in dense interminable line,
Bowed with a grief past power of speech to tell,
Gather the multitudes who loved him well,
As to a dead saint's shrine.

Beyond the tombs the winter sun sinks red ;
Sombre and mournful as the dying day
A mighty concourse crowds with hurried tread
Among these pale memorials of the dead,
 Gaunt symbols glimmering grey.

Down the long pathway comes a stately train
With swinging lights and jewelled censers fair,
And all the high insignia of his reign—
The Miserere's melancholy strain
 Wails through the twilight air.

A slow chant, solemn as the voice of Doom,
In varying cadence swells : a muffled stir
Sways through that gold-lit circle round the tomb,
While the great coffer glittering through the gloom
 Sinks to the sepulchre.

.

Gone the vast throng like forms of glamour shown,
The white-stoled priests, the yellow tapers' light ;
Darkness reclaims her silent city of stone—
All hasten forth—but he lies there alone
With the chill winter night.

THE WIND'S SUMMONS

THE Wind came whining to my door,
 Across the uplands from the sea,
With plaintive burden o'er and o'er,
 ‘Oh, will ye roam the world with me?’

The wintry skies were all too chill,
 The wintry lands too stark and grey :
I would not do the wild Wind's will ;
 I barred the door and said him nay.

But when the Night crept, vast and black,
 Up the long valleys from the sea,

The cold Wind followed in his track,
And swift and stealthy followed he.

.

The mad Wind clamoured at my door ;
His voice was like the angry sea
That breaks in thunder on the shore,
And still he cried, ‘ Come forth to me ! ’

The casements shook and shuddered sore,
He ranged the high walls round and round ;
My chamber rocked from roof to floor,
And all the darkness throbbed with sound.

The wintry dawn rose faint and slow.
He turned him to the frozen lea,
And aye he moaned and muttered low
Along the uplands to the sea.

Sullen and slow the Sea-Wind sped ;
‘ Oh, never doubt the day shall be
When I shall come again,’ he said,
‘ And you come forth and follow me.

‘ The lair of Night shall be your bed,
And fast and far your ghost shall flee,
When you are one with all the Dead
That roam the wide world round with me.’

FINIS

EVEN for you I shall not weep
When I at last, at last am dead,
Nor turn and sorrow in my sleep
Though you should linger overhead.

Even of you I shall not dream
Beneath the waving graveyard grass ;
One with the soul of wind and stream
I shall not heed you if you pass.

Even for you I would not wake,
Too bitter were the tears I knew,
Too dark the road I needs must take—
The road that winds away from you.

AT EVENING

ALL day the clear Spring sunshine mocked the pain
My heart strove blindly with ; the limpid skies
Stared on my grief with bright, indifferent eyes,
While all in vain, in vain,
I wrestled with the doubts that did you wrong,
The shadowy terrors of our severance
That shook my soul with threats of evil chance.

I strove to bridge the gulf with memories—
But sadder than the echo of a song
Sung long ago,
And fainter than the phantom of a dream
Of some fair land,
Dreamed far away in a forgotten place—
Sad as sere leaves, and faint as falling snow—

The past I summoned shrank from my embrace,
The wealth I counted withered in my hand.

But when the amber-coloured twilight came
And young leaves glimmered golden overhead,
Over and o'er a blackbird piped your name
From some green shelter in the garden stead
And then fell silent—and the silence grew
Full of strange solace, and the sense of you.

THE GOLDEN HOUR

STEEPED in a mellow, orange-golden glow,
Dark, clustered elms touch hands across the lane,
Strange glories crown the gabled stacks arow,
And gild each lumbering amber-laden wain.

In jewelled bravery of gold and green
The pallid stubble glistens to the sky,
'Neath limpid seas of luminous air serene,
Where homing rooks float drowsily on high.

Infinite pleasure takes the sense—and yet
Fades in a moment, smitten into pain ;
Changed for a fruitless passion of regret,
As elfin treasure turns to earth again.

And gladness falters like a silenced song—
Sinks with the flame of sunset's coloured fire;
So short th' illumined hour—Alas, so long
The inextinguishable vain desire !

EX UMBRA

IN twilight while I walk alone
A strange voice calls me, clear and low ;
A shadowy hand that seeks my own,
Cold as the wind and soft as snow,
Still leads me, leads me as I pass
Across the grey December grass.

The village windows beckon still
With glow of amber and of gold ;
But my way lies along the hill,
My road must cross the frosty wold ;
And still I feel and still I see
The darkness round me deep and free.

SHEEP-BELLS

DOWN from the upland pastures smooth and high,
Slopes where the light of sunset lingers long,
Where the lone herdsman leads his pearly throng
O'er emerald greensward girt with topaz sky,
Floateth a strange, a magical, melody,—
Pæan and plaint, compact of laughter and sigh,
Filling the yellow eventide with song.

Ah, never thus rang pastoral serenade—
No mortal flocks are folded on that height,
No earthly measure ever tripped so light,
Nor earthly bells such delicate music made—

Too sweet, too wild, the limpid numbers run—
Enchanted echoes blown in eddying flight,
Borne from some wandering faëry cavalcade,
Or charméd lutes by elfin fingers played,
Tinkling a farewell to the setting sun.

IN THE VALLEY

MYRIAD birds in the thicket sing,
Glancing and flitting on eager wing ;
Leaves are green on the branches still,
But the autumn airs breathe chill.

Spring is over and Summer gone,
But the birds in the valley still sing on
To the broad brown hills and the quiet sky,
Though Winter is drawing nigh.

The slow wind sighs and the skies are grey,
But the little birds pipe so shrill, so gay ;
So sweet to-day are the songs they sing
They will waken the banished Spring.

AVE ATQUE VALE

FAREWELL, my Youth! for now we needs must part,
For here the paths divide ;
Here hand from hand must sever, heart from heart,—
Divergence deep and wide.

You 'll wear no withered roses for my sake,
Though I go mourning for you all day long,
Finding no magic more in bower or brake,
No melody in song.

Grey Eld must travel in my company
To seal this severance more fast and sure.
A joyless fellowship, i' faith, 'twill be,
Yet must we fare together, I and he,
Till I shall tread the footpath way no more.

But when a blackbird pipes among the boughs,
On some dim, iridescent day in spring,
Then I may dream you are remembering
Our ancient vows.

Or when some joy foregone, some fate foresworn,
Looks through the dark eyes of a violet,
I may re-cross the set, forbidden bourne,
I may forget
Our long, long parting for a little while,
Dream of the golden splendours of your smile,
Dream you remember yet.

IN BLUE AND GOLD

THE blue sea slumbers in a mist of heat
Beside the amber shore,
At anchor floats a brown-winged fisher fleet
With idle sail and oar.

The pointed stooks against a purple sky
Give back the sunset gold—
I hear the wheeling swallows call and cry,
I watch the day grow old.

The day goes down in splendours strange and deep
Emblazoning land and sea—
O wind that singst this happy earth to sleep,
Bring endless sleep to me !

A MIDNIGHT HARVEST

CORNISH COAST

THE white, white gulls wheel inland,
The breakers rake and grind ;
The swagging clouds go swiftly
With a shattering gale behind ;
What are the white gulls crying
Above the ripened corn ?
' O, harvest will be over
Before the morrow's morn :
No need to whet the sickle,
No need to bring the wain,
The storm shall reap on the cliff-side steep,
And the west wind thresh the grain.'

The white, white gulls whirl gaily,
They keep a merry coil,
But the farmer's heart is heavy
For all his months of toil :
He hears the white gulls' chorus,
Their cries of joyous scorn :
' O, harvest will be over
Or ever comes the morn :
Now go you to your bed, Farmer,
Lie down and take your ease ;
The wind shall reap while you rest and sleep,
And the storm shall scour the leas.'

The white, white foam flies upward,
The black rocks show their teeth,
Dark frowns the towering headland
They grin and gird beneath ;
What are the wild gulls crying
Far up the valleys grey ?

' Hey for the midnight harvest,
The merry breakers' play !
There 'll be harvest out at sea, Farmer,
And harvest here on land :
There 'll be rare ripe grain for the hungry main,
And drowned folk for the strand.'

MIRAGE

WITH milk-white dome and minaret
Most fair my Promised City shone ;
Beside a purple river set
The waving palm-trees beckoned on.

O yon, I said, must be my goal
No matter what the danger be,
The chosen haven of my soul,
How hard soe'er the penalty.

The goal is gained—the journey done—
Yet naught is here but sterile space,
But whirling sand and burning sun,
And hot winds blowing in my face.

SUNSET ON HENNACLIFF

LAPPED in the low light of the westering sun,
The wild gulls circle seaward one by one,
Wheeling and wailing, querulous and shrill,
 Now silver-white, now dun,
As the late lustre touches them at will :
Even their dark fortress set in the blue sea,
 Fringed with perpetual foam,
Gives back a glory from its lichenèd dome
 Where no man's foot may be,
And yon gaunt headland's massive masonry,
Towering on high above the sea-birds' hold,
 Gleams like the Mystic Rose
With dull rich dyes of amaranth and gold :
 Stronger and stronger grows

A glamour of gladness, infinite, untold ;
The hour is full of strange assurances,
Once more the worn heart knows
A golden anchorage of exquisite ease,
Where magic water flows.

• • • • •

A faint sea-fragrance dwells upon the air ;
Autumn's enchantment layeth hold on me,
Stirring the sense to vaguest pageantry,
To fitful memories of days so fair
As no days ever were.

TRAVELLER'S JOY

OVER the hills and far away
The road is long on a summer day ;
Dust glares white in the noontide heat,
But the Traveller's Joy grows strong and sweet ;
 Down the hollow and up the slope
 It binds the hedge with a silken rope.
O the sun that shines and the dust that flies,
And the fresh green leaves for tired eyes—
 Green leaves, and the summer's hope.

Through the valley and over the down
The withering hedge bends dry and brown,
The sycamore leaves hang rent and seared,
And the Traveller's Joy is Old Man's Beard—

Up the marsh and over the lea
The milk-white gulls sail up from the sea—
And it's O for the wind and the weeping rain,
And the summers that never shall rise again
Whatever may come to be.

EPITAPH

Now lay thee down to sleep, and dream of me ;
Though thou art dead and I am living yet,
Though cool thy couch and sweet thy slumbers be,
Dream—do not quite forget.

Sleep all the autumn, all the winter long,
With never a painted shadow from the past
To haunt thee ; only, when the blackbird's song
Wakens the woods at last,

When the young shoots grow lusty overhead,
Here, where the spring sun smiles, the spring wind
grieves,
When budding violets close above thee spread
Their small, heart-shapen leaves,

Pass, O Belovéd, to dreams from slumber deep ;
Recount the store that mellowing time endears,
Thread, through the measureless mazes of thy sleep,
Our old, unchangeful years.

Lie still and listen—while thy sheltering tree
Whispers of suns that rose, of suns that set—
For far-off echoes of the Spring and me.
Dream—do not quite forget.

THE VALLEY OF THE THORN

Down a bleak gorge where neighbouring heights
divide,

I strayed alone one quiet, autumn day,
Between the long hills stretching far and wide,
Most desolate and grey.

No netted copse, no populous underwood
Made fair that desert pale and tempest-worn,
But solitary in the valley stood
One twisted, wind-scorched thorn.

‘Of Death-in-Life the very seal and sign,
Sterility’s own self,’ I said, ‘is here;
What desolation can compare with thine?
What solitude so drear?’

‘ Flowerless and fruitless, beaten by the blast,
Bereft of every joy ; poor, tortured tree,
Thou art grown old in grief, yet sure, at last,
Death’s wind shall solace thee ! ’

And as I lingered there a while, and dreamed
Dim day-dreams full of idle fantasies,
A low voice answered me—or so it seemed—
A murmur on the breeze.

‘ Nay,’ sighed the voice from out the barren thorn,
‘ Content am I and happy in my lot ;
Fair is my life to me and blithely borne
Here in this quiet spot.

‘ Oft will the lark sing ; oft the mild west wind
Bring near the solemn soothing of the sea ;
Often the great clouds, white and purple-lined,
Go wandering over me.

‘ All the long summer, at the twilight hour,
I feel the benediction of the dew ;
I watch the great moon like a golden flower
Grow, in the dusky blue.

‘ Tho’ never springtide findeth me arrayed
In snow-white glory as my kinsfolk be,
The sheep have sheltered ’neath my scanty shade,
And small birds built in me.

‘ Once, long ago, how long I do forget,
But many, many a moon of sun and rain,
Two lovers here beneath my branches met,
And vowed to meet again.

‘ They came no more, but still I think of them
Over and o’er, so gay they were and young,
And sigh the name He carved upon my stem,
The snatch of song She sung.

'I feel the shadow of the wild swan's wings,
 I hear the murmur of the heather bees ;
My days are rich with store of pleasant things
 And happy memories.'

Oft have I searched yon labyrinth forlorn
 Of barren slopes and stony gorges hoar,
But that sequestered valley of the thorn,
 I found it nevermore.

NEIGES D'ANTAN

My Doris, bind your loosened hair,
And let those dropping tears be dried ;
Because we found the roses fair
Need we upbraid them that they died ?

What though we watched the white moon rise,
The strong sun spread his golden net ;
Must we then deal in tears and sighs
Shall we repine because they set ?

Crown me the cup with rose and vine,
Fill—nor forecast to-morrow's need—
To-day is neither yours nor mine,
Though yesterday was ours indeed.

Sigh not, but smile, my very dear,
Nor vex your breast with Why and How ;
For that was There—and this is Here—
For that was Then—and this is Now.

OPEN SESAME

So low swings the broad, gold moon I could clasp her
—nearly ;

Up to the brow of the down, and an arm's-length
merely—

Only a span—yet she mounts, while I pause and
wonder,

Chill and remote as the thin white clouds beyond her.

So simple the charmèd word I could almost say it ;
The glimmering dusk, the dew-fall, half betray it ;
Half—yet the silence holds her spell unspoken,
Mute, while the instant fades estranged and broken.

Almost I tread the twilight fields of faery,
Almost I pluck their blossoms frail and airy,

E'en tho' the spoil should turn, home-coming hither,
Armfuls of yellowing leaves and weeds that wither.

Held to the earth's full heart, a moment wholly,
Know we nor fear nor fret, but gladness solely ;
Joy in our part in all—in life's possession,
Joy in the Joy of Life beyond expression.

Joy in the task beloved tho' unavailing,
Joy in the splendid steeps too high for scaling ;
Joy in the fleeting glimpse, the vain endeavour,
Tho' Almost meadows flower by the gates of Never.

EPHEMERON

GREY on the daisied grass,
Shadows of moving leaves ;
Happy the brown bees hum,
'Summer has come—has come' ;
Lightly the low winds pass,
Shaking the peony-sheaves.

Tulips the sun looks through
Shining and stately stand ;
Redder than rubies glow
All their great globes arow,
Bright on the summer blue,
Lanthorns of fairy-land.

Ever and aye my own
Still shall this moment be :
I shall remember all—
Shadows and tulips tall,
Scent from the bean-fields blown,
Song of the humble-bee.

.
Lost is that fragrant hour,
Dewy and golden-lit—
Dead—for the memory
Pitiful comes to me
Wan as a withered flower—
Only the ghost of it.

REQUIESCAT

BURY me deep when I am dead,
Far from the woods where sweet birds sing ;
Lap me in sullen stone and lead,
Lest my poor dust should feel the Spring.

Never a flower be near me set,
Nor starry cup nor slender stem,
Anemone nor violet,
Lest my poor dust remember them.

And you—wherever you may fare—
Dearer than birds, or flowers, or dew—
Never, ah me, pass never there,
Lest my poor dust should dream of you.

THE WHITE KNIGHT

(OLD FRENCH. 1600)

GALLANTS, riding to the war,
Riding o'er the lea,
On the battlefield afar
Greet my love for me !

How should we your true-love greet ?
How your true-love know ?
Milk-white is his courser fleet,
White as falling snow.

White the cross upon his breast ;
Golden spurs hath he ;
White upon his lance's crest
Floats a pennon free.

Weep no more, no more, ladye,
Lowly rests his head ;
On the plains of Brittany
Lies your lover dead.

Weep not, ladye, weep no more ;
In a meadow fair
By his grave grey friars four
Speed his soul with prayer.

OUR LADY'S PENITENT

THEY hanged him high on a withered tree
On the wasteland bare and black ;
Pale in the dusk they turned to flee,
And never a soul looked back.

Mute they fled from the place of dread,
But each in his heart made moan :
' Oh, it 's up and away from yon gallows grey
Ere the foul fiend claim his own ! '

Robber, murderer, beast of prey,
Fell as the were-wolf's race,
None dared stay in the silence grey
To look on that dying face.

None dared bide while the death-gasp died

On the lips foredoomed to hell ;

Yet all the days of his dark life through

Had he loved Our Lady well.

Still from his spoil would he choose the best

Of glittering gold and gem,

To hang in worship across her breast

Or lay at her garment's hem.

And all night long, 'twixt the man and Death,

She hovered in glory there,

And held him up in his living breath

With her long hands slim and fair.

All night long did she hearken—yea,

Till the evil soul was shriven :

She loosed his hands with the dawn of day,

Leaden and stark swung the lifeless clay,

But the ghost fled forth forgiven.

THE WRECKER OF PRIEST'S COVE

ONE yellow rushlight glimmered dim
Among the shadows deep,
Where the dying man lay gaunt and grim,
And his watcher drowsed to sleep.

‘ Black is the night, and the lamp burns bright
To guide the good ships in ;
There is work, maybe, on the rocks for me,
And a purse of gold to win.

‘ Now why does he cling so fast, so fast,
To the shore rocks sharp and black ?
Aye has the sea befriended me,
And the sea shall have him back.

‘ And what should a dead man do with gold
That he grips his belt so tight ?

’Twas all for me through the beating sea
He made yon lusty fight.

‘ Oh, the ribbed roof-tree hangs over me
And not the open sky ;
Gone are the rocks and the heavy belt,
And a doting fool am I.

‘ Now curses on this cankering pain
That will not let me free,
That keeps me back from the worn cliff track
And the harvest of the sea !

‘ Go, get ye to the window-pane,
And tell me what ye see ;
Is there ever a ship across the bar
Where the merry breakers be ?

'Look out, look out across the bay,
Look out again once more ;
Is it burning bright, our bonny light
That brings the ships inshore ? '

She 's ta'en her to the window-pane
And looked across the bay ;
' Oh, the night is chill, and the waves are still
And the wild-fowl boding day.'

' Look out, look out across the bay,
And tell me what ye see ;
A clay cold weight is on my breast
And the dead-thraw grapples me.'

She 's ta'en her to the window-pane
To look across the bay,
And thrice her lips gaped wide to speak,
But nothing could she say.

A black cloud filled the window-pane
And wrapped the house around,
And out of the gloom came a hollow din,
Like a great ship gone aground.

And out of the gloom came a hollow din
Of a great ship drawing near,
With labouring ropes, and creaking blocks,
And shipmen calling clear.

Slow strained the masts, and the timbers groaned
Like a ship in her agony ;
The chamber was full of the sound of surf
And the clash of a breaking sea.

‘ Are ye come for me from the foul black sea ?
Win back, ye carrion crew !
Back to the hell where I bade ye dwell,
For never I ’ll sail with you.’

But the death-gasp rattled in his throat
As he reared him in the bed ;
The room was still as the corpse fell back,
And the murky cloud had sped.

It was a great ship crossed the bar,
With all sail set went she ;
'Gainst tide and wind, with the shore behind,
That ship put out to sea.

THE QUERN OF THE GIANTS

Lo, this is the song of a king and his kingly desire,
The story of wrong and undoing—of terror and fire.

Full fair was the store of King Frodi with treasure
untold,

And fair were his purple-dyed webs and his platters of
gold;

But strangest and rarest of all were the Quern-stones
that lay

Dull and hoar, 'mid the gleam of the gold and the
woven array;

The mill for the grinding of aught that its conqueror
would,

With power for the marring or making—for ill or for
good.

Though the strongest and the best of the land put
their hands to the Quern,
Over heavy and great seemed the stones for a mortal
to turn :

Till it chanced in the spring of the year that King
Frodi went forth
Over seas to a comrade aforetime, a prince of the
north.

Full blithely they met and they greeted, for long was
the space
Since either had parted from other, or looked on his
face.

And blithe was the time of their feasting ; much had
they to show,

Spake each of his land and his people—their weal and
their woe.

And Frodi told aye of the Quern-stones, the hoard of
his sire,

How none was so strong as to turn them, for all his
desire,

Nor heroes, nor sons of the plough, but forsaken they
lay

Dull and hoar, 'mid the gleam of the gold and the
woven array.

And the monarch, his friend of aforetime, smiled,
musing, and said,

‘ Let the bondwomen, Menia and Frenia, be hitherward
led.’

So Menia and Frenia stood forth in the light of the day,

And none of the children of men were so stalwart as they,

So mighty of limb and of stature—no word did they speak,

But their arms were crossed over their bosoms, submissive and meek.

And sold were the sisters for bond-slaves, and borne oversea

In the brazen-beaked ship of King Frodi, and joyful was he.

And mute 'neath the yoke of the stranger they bowed them again,

But out of their eyes looked remembrance, and questioning pain.

They lifted their hands to the Quern—as a task unforget
got

Did they bow their proud heads to the grinding and
murmurèd not.

And Frodi, beholding, laughed out, ‘Do ye labour,
nor cease,

That the land may be glad with your labours—*Grind
Gold and grind Peace.*’

Then patient and strong toiled the sisters, and never
were days

Like those of the Peace of King Frodi for honour and
praise.

Then no man was famished with hunger, nor evil of
heart,

And banished was want from the homestead and guile
from the mart.

And sweet was the sound of the grinding as zephyr-stirred groves,

As the chime of great bells undersea, or the cooing of doves.

And glad was the heart of the people, and green were the trees,

And fair shone the light of the sun on the blossoming leas;

And summer-time waned into winter, and still flowed the gold

Like a river of light o'er the white and the glittering wold.

Still patient and strong toiled the sisters by night and by day,

And none in the length of the land were so weary as they.

Bleak and grey o'er the peace and the plenty, forlorn
and alone

Did they tower in their might and their sorrow ;
and Frenia made moan :

‘ The wind bloweth cold on our bosoms, the snow and
the sleet

Fall fast on our shelterless heads, and the frost gnaws
our feet ;

‘ Our eyelids wax heavy with sleep, sore awearied
are we ;

Grant us respite, O King, for a while, from our travail
for thee.’

‘ So long as the pause of a song for the voices that
sing,

So long as the call of the cuckoo is silent in spring,

‘So long shall ye rest and no longer, so long shall ye
cease

From the grinding of pleasure and plenty, of treasure
and peace.’

‘There spake not thy wisdom, O King, nor the voice
of thy heart.

Bethink thee, and grant that we rest us a little apart.

‘Consider the peace and the plenty, the gold and the
grain,

And more treasure yet will we grind when we waken
again.’

Full gentle and sad spake the bondwomen mighty of
limb,

But the heart of the King was grown gross, and his
eyes waxen dim ;

He saw not their sweat-furrowed brows nor their
anguish untold,

But only the gleam and the glow of the torrent of gold.

‘ So long as the pause of a song for the voices that sing,
So long as the call of the cuckoo is silent in spring,

‘ So long shall ye rest and no longer, so long shall ye
cease ;

Toil on—grinding gold for my garner—grind gold
and grind peace.’

‘ *Even so, till the King be content with the thing we shall
grind.*’

And murmuring muttered the Quern like the voice of
the wind ;

Dark, dark grew the face of the heavens, and dark
grew the sea,

And a low wind rose up through the gloom, blowing
icy and free.

And Frenia smiled unto Menia : ‘ The Quern is the
same

Though the might of our fathers be fled, and forgotten
their name ;

‘ What thing did we grind for the world in the days
overpast,

In the days when the House of the Giants stood goodly
and vast ?

‘ Nay, surely ’twas never aforetime the Peace or the
Gold

That we ground for the children of men in our home-
stead of old ? ’

And Menia said : ‘ Now shall we grind till the King
be content

With the fruit of our toil—till the walls of the palace
be rent ;

'And the raven shall feast on the hearth, and the wolves
shall make cheer—
Full soon to the wolf and the crow shall King Frodi
be dear.'

And Frenia said : ' Grind we the wrack and the utter-
most woe,
The ruin and rapine, yea—the red right hand of
the foe ;

' So—grind we and spare not, come havoc, and fury,
and flame !

Come all, for the fall of King Frodi, his spoiling and
shame !

' Let the fire and the sword have their will, aye let slay
and let burn ! '

And hollow and murmuring hoarse rose the voice of
the Quern,

Till it crashed like the shore-driven waves 'neath the
hurricane's breath,
Crying, '*Fire, fire and sword to the land, Desolation
and Death!*'

'It is coming—O King blind of heart! dost thou
slumber and sleep,
Even now while black ships of the stranger are breast-
ing the deep?'

The red flames brake forth from the earth and her
furrows were rent

With the steel-girdled sons of her might, rising thick
as the bent

Of the wheat-blades in spring; and the sea roaring up
to the land

On its tide bore the ships of the foeman unhurt o'er
the strand.

And where was the wealth of King Frodi, the Gold
and the Peace?

Ah, where are the leaves that the winter-wind sweeps
from the trees?

And red shone the feet of the maidens, the Quern-
stones were red,

As they ground, dealing death to the living and flame
to the dead;

And still, as they sang, sang the sword and the raven-
ing fire—

And the heart of King Frodi was emptied of thought
or desire.

Still over the dead and the dying the flames flickered
high,

They leapt in the blood-reek, rejoicing, and reddened
the sky,

Till silent at last sank the crying of horror and dule—
‘*Lo ! Sister, the grinding is over, the garner is full.*’

They ceased, with their arms on their bosoms crossed,
passive and stern,
And hushed was the sound of their song and the voice
of the Quern.

Lo ! this is the song of a king and his lust of the gold,
Of a king and his glory gone by as a tale that is told.

THE ISLE OF VOICES

FAIR blows the wind to-day, fresh along the valleys,
Strange with the sounds and the scents of long ago ;
Sinks in the willow-grove, shifts, and sighs, and rallies—
Whence, Wind, and why, Wind, and whither do you
go ?

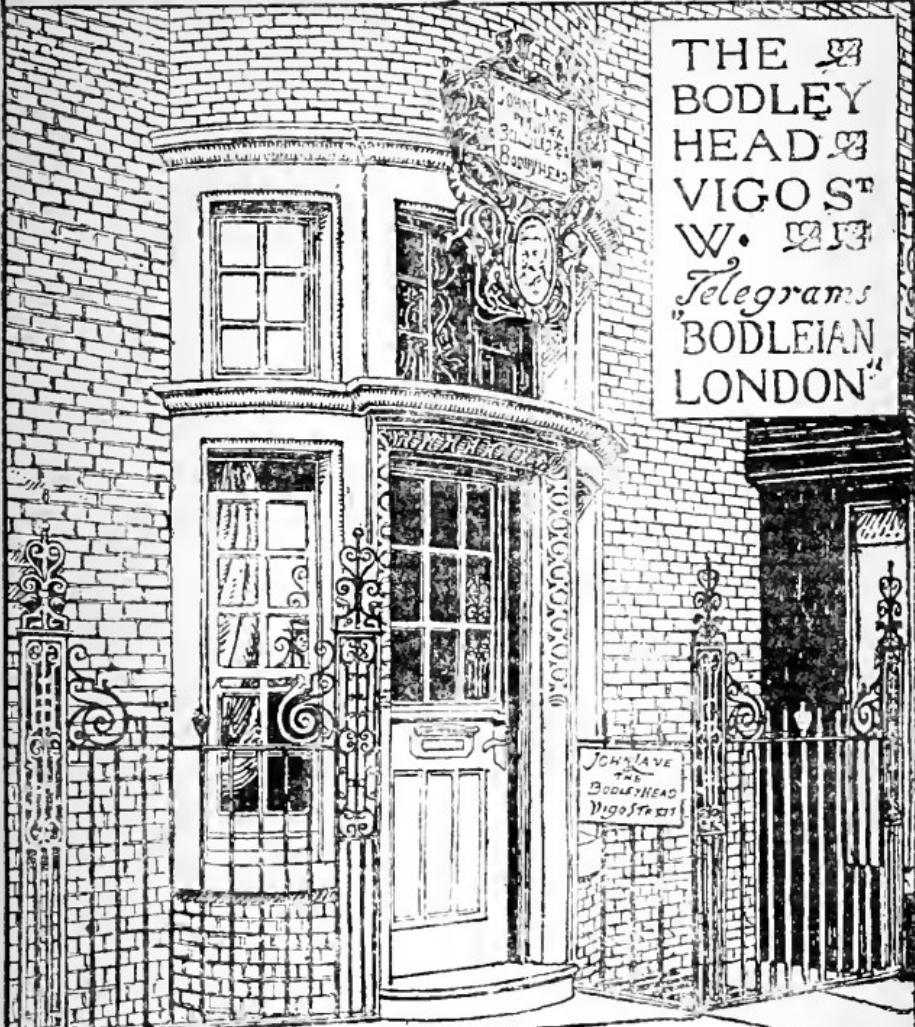
Why, Wind, and whence, Wind ?—Yet well and well
I know it—

Word from a lost world, a world across the sea ;
No compass guides there, never chart will show it—
Green grows the grave there that holds the heart of me.

Sunk lies my ship, and the cruel sea rejoices,
Sharp are the reefs where the hungry breakers fret—
Land so long lost to me !—Youth, the Isle of Voices,
Call never more to me—I who must forget.

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